

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXII

AUGUST 1, 1946 — Grand Rapids, Michigan

NUMBER 20

MEDITATION

Yesterday's Example Of Unbelief

For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believeth not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Hebrews 3:16-19.

Take heed, brethren!

While it is called "Today," and you are in the house of the Son of God, exhort one another daily!

Beware, all and each of you, that diligent heed is given to the Voice that spoke Yesterday, and that speaks Today, the Voice of the Son of God!

Watch over one another, and over yourselves, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; or lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Extremely serious the matter is, a matter of life and death. For you are in the house of God, and in that house the Voice is heard, the Voice of the Son of God, speaking of His eternal covenant, of all the goodness of His house, of forgiveness and mercy, of righteousness and life, of fellowship of friendship with the living God; speaking, too, of your "part" in that covenant of the Most High, of your calling in that house of God, to cleave to Him, trust in Him, love Him with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, to forsake the world and its lust, crucify the flesh, and to walk in a new and holy life. That Voice will be heard. It brooks no moment of inattention. It knows of no compromise. It must be obeyed.

Take heed, therefore, brethren!

And say not in your heart that you have no need of this exhortation, that you are the Church of God, gathered out of the world, sanctified and cleansed, and that, therefore, all is well.

Attend, for your warning, to "Yesterday's" example of unbelief.

"Yesterday" the Church was in the wilderness: and there it perished!

It could not enter in, that Church, because of unbelief!

Dreadful history! More dreadful even than our translation of the text would suggest. For it might leave the impression, in the sixteenth verse, that only some of that generation perished in the wilderness, and failed to enter into the rest of God. But, according to the original, also that verse, like the two that follow, should be read in question form: "For who, when they had heard, did provoke? were they not all that came out of Egypt by Moses?" And this is corroborated by the statement in the tenth verse, that the Lord was grieved with "that generation"; as well as by the historical account of this dreadful business, according to which, of those that were twenty years and older, only Joshua and Caleb saw the promised rest!

Dreadful, indeed!

The Church of "Yesterday" failed to enter into rest of God!

Their carcasses fell in the wilderness!

Considering that horrible example of unbelief in the Church of "Yesterday", say not in your heart that the Church of "Today" has no need of exhortation.

"Today" if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation!

Take heed, brethren!

Wicked unbelief!

That, in one word, characterizes the disposition and attitude of those that could not enter into the rest of God.

Unbelief, and that, too, manifested in all its cor-

ruption and wickedness, was the cause, on their part, of their failure to inherit the promise.

They were in the house of the Son of God. Indeed, it was another "Day." It was "Yesterday." It was the day of shadows, the day of the law. It was the day, when Moses appeared as the servant appointed over that particular dispensation and manifestation of the house of God. Through him the Son of God spoke at that time. Yet, it was the same house of God, essentially, as "Today." The whole section here presupposes that "Yesterday" the covenant of God was the same as "Today," and that then and now there was the same promise of rest.

Then, as now, all that were in the house heard the Voice. O, it is true, they heard the voice of Moses, but in such manner that, through his voice, they clearly and distinctly heard the Voice of the Son of God. By Moses they were led out of Egypt, yet by such mighty signs and wonders that there could be no doubt in the minds of that whole generation, whether those that were of Israel, or those of the "mixed multitude", that it was the mighty hand of Jehovah that delivered them.

They heard the Voice!

When, at the mount, they formally entered into the house of God as it was established there, the Voice spoke to them, through Moses: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." Ex. 19: 4-6. They heard the Voice through the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the smoking and trembling mountain. And all through the desert, they clearly heard the Voice and saw it, in the pillar of smoke and of fire, by day and by night, by signs and mighty wonders, in the manna that rained from heaven, and the water that gushed from the rocks.

O, it was the same Voice we hear today in the house of the Son of God, speaking the same things, of the same deliverance, the same rest, the same calling to be a kingdom of priests before the Lord!

But they believed not!

That was the root of the matter. The text uses different words to describe the sins of that wicked generation: they sinned, they provoked the Lord, they obeyed not (vs. 18); but it may all be expressed in that one word: *unbelief*!

Wicked unbelief!

For what, pray, is unbelief? It surely is not a sort of natural doubt and uncertainty as to whether we really heard the Voice. On the contrary, it is a wicked rejection of, and rebellion against, the Voice, against the Word of God that is heard, and that asserts itself more

emphatically according as the Voice is more clearly heard, and more distinctly understood. Thus it was with the wicked generation in the wilderness. With their whole soul, they rejected the Word of God. For a moment, as they heard the Voice, they were afraid, they trembled; but they soon forgot their fears, denied that they heard, refused to heed. With their will they set themselves against that Word. They had no delight in it. O, a land flowing with milk and honey appealed to their carnal lusts, as long as they could conceive of it as another Egypt, only without its oppression. But the "rest", conceived as the house and covenant of God, in which they would be a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people peculiar unto God, they despised. With their heart they rejected the Word of God, for they did not love Him, neither put their confidence in Him. . . .

They could not enter because of unbelief.

And always unbelief is wicked rejection of, and rebellion against the Word of God, rooted in enmity against the Most High.

Yet, nowhere does unbelief become so clearly and emphatically manifest as in the house of the Son of God, where the Voice is heard, clearly, constantly: "This is My house: walk before me, and be ye upright!"

Today if ye will hear His voice. . . .

'Harden not your hearts!

Take heed, brethren!

Wanton provocation!

Their unbelief, itself a state of the heart, and of the mind and will, expressed itself.

It translated itself into deeds! This was, of course, inevitable. Just as faith has its works, so also unbelief is active, and reveals itself in deeds of rebellion.

The text describes these works of their unbelief in various ways. They *provoked* the Lord: "for who, when they had heard, did provoke? were they not all that came out of Egypt by Moses?" They *sinned*: "but with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned?" They *obeyed not*: "and to whom did he swear that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed (better: obeyed) not?"

They sinned. They obeyed not. They provoked the Lord.

But do not all men sin? And is not all sin disobedience? And does not all sin and every form of disobedience provoke the Lord to wrath? To be sure. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven over all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Yet, nowhere does sin become revealed as wanton rebellion and refusal to glorify God, as open and utter contempt of the holiness of God's covenant, as in the house of God. Nowhere is disobedience manifest and willful

departure from the way of God's covenant and precepts, a deliberate trampling under foot of all that is holy, as in the Church. There, where the Voice is heard, where the Word is preached, where the mighty arm of the God of our salvation is revealed, where the manna drops out of heaven, where the rocks split to gush forth rivers of water in the wilderness, where the signs of God's covenant are visible, and the table of the Lord is prepared, — there the measure of iniquity is filled, there the way of disobedience is walked to the bitter end, there the hearts are fully hardened, there sinners stand at the very head of all the ungodly, there they become prepared for a central place in the eternal desolation of hell!

It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha.
And for Tyre and Sidon!

For there, in the Church of "Yesterday" and of "Today" the anger of the Lord is provoked as nowhere else!

In a sense, a human form of speaking about God this: to provoke the Lord to anger. For God is unchangeable. He cannot be provoked. Wrath is not a passing passion with Him, that can be roused and appeased. It is eternal. In His counsel He always upholds these wicked violators of His holy covenant in His sovereign wrath. He is angry with the wicked every day. Yet, in time, these wicked reprobates, that dwell with the righteous elect in the house of God as it is revealed in this world, fill the measure of iniquity by deeds of wanton rebellion and contempt of the sanctuary of God; and thus they are said to provoke the Most High to anger. They provoked Him to His face, and invoked upon their heads the fiercest revelation of the burning wrath of the Holy One!

And, O, how they sinned, how they disobeyed, how they provoked the Lord to His face!

At the smoking and trembling mount, they made gods after the imagination of their own heart. They murmured against Moses, and, therefore, against the Voice, that he had led them out of Egypt, in order that they might die in the wilderness. They despised the bread from heaven. They lusted after the fleshpots of Egypt, preferring the house of bondage to the rest of God. . . .

They refused to enter in, threatening to kill those that would lead them into the promised rest, and appointing themselves a captain to return to Egypt. . . .

They loved the world, the flesh, the bondage of sin, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. . . .

And afterwards, during the dreadful forty years, they did not repent. On the contrary, they continued to provoke the Lord to anger, till all had perished. . . .

Terrible provocation!

Take heed, therefore!

No, indeed, not as if it were possible that any of God's saints should perish.

Even as we contemplate this dreadful example of "Yesterday", in which the beauty and glory and certainty of God's purpose of election almost disappears from view, we will not be oblivious of the truth that these unbelievers were reprobates, vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction, and that they did not and could not make the Word of God of none effect.

There is no falling away of saints. The Promise is sure to the heirs.

Yet, take heed! For the fact remains that there is always much chaff with the wheat, much flesh in the Church as she is gathered in this world. There are the children of the flesh, that are not Israel, though they be of Israel; and there is the old nature of sin in every believer, and the motions of sin are ever operative in their members, while they have but a small beginning of the new obedience. And because of the presence of the flesh in the house of God, "Today" as well as "Yesterday" the Church must always take heed, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

The flesh is unbelieving.

And unbelief never enters into the rest of God.

They could not enter in. . . .

They perished! For, not only did they fail to enter into the earthly land of Canaan, the promise of "Yesterday," but neither did they enter into the eternal rest of God's heavenly tabernacle. If their sin and disobedience, their rebellion and provocation of God were not sufficient to establish this fact, the words their "carcasses fell in the wilderness," should leave no doubt. O, they did not simply die in the desert: the wrath of God struck them down, by plagues, by fire, by serpents, by the earth's opening up to swallow them up alive, thousands upon thousands of them. . . .

They could not enter in because of unbelief!

O, they did not perish because of the terrible desert: God saved His people and provided for them, and bare them as on eagles' wings. They did not fail to enter in because of the mighty nations that possessed the land: God overcame and destroyed them. They did not fail to inherit the promise, because they were few and weak: in faith, one of them could chase a thousand.

Unbelief made them incapable to enter!

We do not fail to enter into the rest of God, because the powers of sin and death, the forces of darkness and of the world are too mighty: God has overcome them all in Christ.

The victory is surely ours through faith. Fear not, little flock!

But unbelief lusts after Egypt: it never enters!

Watch ye, therefore!

H. H.

The Standard Bearer

Semi-Monthly, except Monthly in July and August

Published by

The Reformed Free Publishing Association
1463 Ardmore St., S. E.

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Communications relative to subscription should be addressed to MR. GERRIT PIPE, 1463 Ardmore St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan. All Announcements, and Obituaries must be sent to the above address and will not be placed unless the regular fee of \$1.00 accompanies the notice.

(Subscription price \$2.50 per year)

Entered as Second Class mail at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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EDITORIALS

And Are They Not Right?

In the Calvin Forum of May 1946, the Rev. P. Prins of Groningen, the Netherlands, writes about the situation of the Reformed Churches in the old country, particularly about the schism that occurred there, and especially about the decisions of the so-called "appeal-synod" of the synodicals, held in the first part of this year, which decisions we published some time ago in our Standard Bearer.

He praises the conciliatory spirit and attitude of this synod as expressed in its decisions.

And he complains about the uncharitable attitude assumed over against these decisions by the "liberated churches."

We quote him:

"We were hence called to face from every angle the weighty question: Is a reunion with those who have left our communion possible? This we did, and the outcome was that we proposed to Synod that the old but recently controverted doctrinal point of 1905 as to the relation between regeneration and baptism be replaced by a doctrinal deliverance which, so we hoped, would possess greater clarity and would make a more direct appeal to our people and contain no stumbling stones, which according to the claim of many could not be said about the deliverance of 1905. You can well imagine that this was no light matter and that synod would do so only after careful deliberation. It must be said, however, that throughout the meetings such a fine fraternal spirit prevailed that the brethren came to harmonious conclusions. In the end Synod decided to formulate such a new deliverance on the Covenant of Grace and related problems. . . .

"We have hence dropped the decisions of the Synod of 1905 and have done so, not because of any errors they might contain, but because this formulation was in the opinion of many not sufficiently clear, and because in more recent years certain questions have arisen which were not touched upon in the 1905 deliverance. In view of this fact we are in hopes that many people who heretofore had certain objections against the 1905 deliverance but had not yet left the church, will change their mind and remain with us. It is hoped this move will hence serve to stop the schism. We fully recognize that this was a radical step. Moreover, we are in hopes that many church officers who did not agree with the 1905 deliverance and the decisions and commentary of the Synod of 1942, and who, on that account have left the church,

will now return. We were determined to do all in our power to restore unity. For this we were prepared to make every sacrifice short of the truth.

"This Committee also proposed to Synod that a small committee be appointed to confer with delegates of the Churches which now call themselves 'liberated'. In this proposed conference all discussions were to be based solely upon Scripture and the Three Formularies of Unity, not even upon the newly adopted deliverance of the present Synod on the covenant. Also this motion was adopted. We now sincerely hope that two things have been achieved, viz., that the defection will come to a stop and that many of those who left the Church will decide to return."

Thus far the Rev. Prins on the acts and motives of the "appeal-synod."

The whole leaves, on us, at least, a strange impression.

First of all, the whole description makes the impression that the Synod was motivated by fear because of the unexpectedly large proportions the schism had assumed, and by the desire to stop its progress, and to reduce it to the smallest possible limits. To seek unity with all that are of the same faith with us, is, of course, laudable. And to be prepared, in the interest of this unity, to make every sacrifice short of the truth, as the Rev. Prins writes that the Synod was, is also commendable. However, if we consider all this in the light of the recent history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and especially in the light of the decisions of the Synods of Sneek-Utrecht, 1939-43, and of Utrecht 1943-45, we are, nevertheless, afraid that the motives of the last Synod were not so laudable as the Rev. Prins tries to make us believe.

Consider that the Synod of Sneek-Utrecht made its decisions binding.

Consider, further, that the following Synod, that of Utrecht 1943-45, was flooded with protests, but remained adamant in its hierarchical demand: "no one may teach anything contrary to the decisions of 1942."

And then consider that only after the disastrous results of these decisions were seen in the churches, and the schism assumed alarming proportions, the Synod made a conciliatory gesture; and decide for yourselves whether there is no reason to think that the last Synod was motivated rather by a desire to save what possibly could be saved, than by a desire to seek and restore unity on the basis of truth and justice?

In other words, if only a few churches and a small number of members had been concerned in the schism, the Synod would have paid no attention to their protests.

But now the schism assumed alarming proportions, and threaten to continue, the Synod seriously considered the question: is reunion possible?

Hence, the Rev. Prins writes that the Synod is in hopes that the schism may now be stopped, that many that planned to leave will now remain, and that others will return. They are numbering the people? And that motive is not spiritual, but carnal. The Church is not estimated by numbers, but purely by its faithfulness to the Word of God.

Besides, is it quite proper, for the synodicals, to seek *reunion* with the "liberated churches" as long as they, the synodicals, do not retract their decisions and confess their wrong? Have they not solemnly declared that the decisions of 1942 were in harmony with the Word of God? Did they not insist that nothing might be taught in the churches contrary to these decisions? Did they not declare those that refused to bend their neck under the synodical yoke to be heretics and schismatics? And were they not adamant in this stand despite hundreds of protests? How, then, can the Synod seek *reunion* with those schismatics and public sinners? Must they not rather refuse all fellowship with them, only admonishing them occasionally as one does an excommunicant?

And, for the same reason, what is the sense of the Committee that is supposed to meet with delegates, mark you, official delegates, of the "liberated churches" as long as the synodical decisions stand? How can they possibly meet and deliberate together on a common basis, i.e., of Scripture and the Confessions? Must this be considered a concession on the part of Synod that they should never have made those decisions of 1942? Does the Synod conceive of a possibility that this combined meeting of committees may formulate something better than even the last Synod was able to compose? If so, why does not the Synod simply retract its decisions, and confess its sinful acts of the last six years? If not, what is the sense of such a meeting?

And is it not true that the Synod deposed office-bearers of the now "liberated churches", professors, ministers, elders, and deacons, on the basis of Art. 79 of the Church Order? Is the synodical committee now to meet with those deposed officebearers, in the person of their delegates, to establish a basis for reunion?

At the time of this writing, May 28, it is already quite evident that the hopes expressed above by the Rev. Prins will be dashed to pieces. The "liberated churches" do not view the decisions of the "appeal-synod" as a possible basis of reconciliation.

In fact, the same letter from which we quoted above, the Rev. Prins already expresses his disappointment as follows:

"As a matter of fact, however, it must be confessed that the papers of the Schilder-group have so far exhibited little appreciation for all the labors and the conciliatory spirit of the recent Synod."

And we are not surprised.

In fact, we quite agree with the "liberated churches" that the "appeal-synod" in deepest reality showed no conciliatory spirit at all. For they maintained all the decisions of the former synods, and they justified all their hierarchical actions.

If the schism in the Churches of the Netherlands is to be undone, and the breach is to be healed, they must first make a clean slate, confess that they should never have picked up the quarrel about the differences of opinion on the floor of the Synod 1936; that they should never have formulated any binding decisions, especially not during the war; that they should never have deposed officebearers right and left, and lord it over God's heritage, as they tried to do; and then leave the discussion of the differences of opinion for a long time to come to the organic life of the Churches, bearing one another in the love of Christ.

But it appears that this is not in the offing.

The Rev. Prins writes: "Now they demand that all suspensions should first be nullified and that the Synod make humble confession of all the injustices which it is claimed she committed against the brethren."

I believe that this demand of the "liberated churches" is correct.

And I am convinced that the Synod actually committed many and crying injustices.

But the Rev. Prins adds: "It will readily be seen that it cannot be expected that all these ecclesiastical acts performed in good faith should after a year's time be declared to have been sinful."

But why not? And is it easier after two year's time? Or must half a century elapse, so that a new generation is able to review the acts of the present, without personal prejudices, before such a confession can be expected?

Still, in my opinion, that is the only way to a reunion.

The "appeal-synod" was a failure.

H. H.

PROTESTANT REFORMED

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The Idea Of The Covenant

(Continued)

We agree, then, with Dr. Bavinck, when he states that the covenant is the very essence of religion, of religion, that is, in the sense of fellowship with the living God. And we would express this somewhat more clearly and concisely by maintaining that the covenant is, essentially, fellowship with the ever blessed God. We also agree with Kuyper when he defines the covenant as an act of friendship. And again, we would emphasize this idea by insisting that the covenant itself is, essentially, a relation, a bond of friendship. Accordingly, we would define the idea of the covenant as that living bond of fellowship between God and man that assumes the particular form of friendship. And by friendship we mean such a bond of fellowship and intimate communion of love that subsists between persons on the basis of the highest possible equality that differ in respect to personal properties. Friends have no secrets, they enter into each other's life. And this is possible only on the basis of equality. On the other hand, true friendship is fellowship, and fellowship cannot subsist between persons that are identical in every respect. They supplement each other. Perfect friendship is a bond between persons that together form a perfect unity, that lacks nothing, and into which no other can enter. Hence, on the basis of equality there must be personal distinction. And the idea of the covenant is briefly expressed in the term friendship, or bond of friendship between God and man. In that bond God is the Friend-sovereign, Who reveals Himself to man, leads him into the secrets of His counsel, opens His heart to him, and causes him to taste His blessed grace; and man is the friend-servant of God, who dwells in His house, walks and talks with Him, loves Him with his whole being, and consecrates himself and all things in the house of God to His praise and glory. Indeed, the covenant is the essence of religion!

That this idea of the covenant is based on the teaching of Holy Writ is not difficult to demonstrate. In paradise God reveals Himself to Adam, and speaks to him as a friend with his friend; and Adam knew God in the cool of day. The first creation is concentrated in paradise, the house of God; paradise has its significant center in the tree of life, that symbol of life in God's fellowship; and the whole is concentrated in man, who is placed over the whole house of God to have dominion over all creatures. In the heart of man is the ethical center of the whole creation, and through that heart all creation is united to the heart of God.

Adam is the house-servant of God in the covenant of friendship. Of the early saints we read that they walked with God, a term denoting intimate fellowship and friendship. Gen. 5:22; 6:8. We read that they talk with God, that God reveals His counsel to them, and hides nothing from them. Gen. 6:13; 9:9; 18:17ff. Abraham is called the friend of God, Isa. 41:8; Jas. 2:23. To Moses the Lord spoke as a man speaketh with his friend, Ex. 33:11; and the Lord knew him face to face. Moreover, it is this idea of the covenant that is symbolized in the tabernacle and the temple, expressing the idea of God's dwelling with His people under one roof. And it is well known that the covenant relation between God and Israel is presented as a marriage relation, that most intimate of all human relationships, and that unfaithfulness to and transgression of the covenant is called adultery. The highest realization of the relation of God's people to Him in Christ is expressed in the words of the sacerdotal prayer: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." John 17:23. Almost defined is this idea of the covenant in Ps. 25:14: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." The church is the temple of the living God, and she has the promise: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." II Cor. 6:16. And the end of all, the highest realization of God's purposes of salvation, is expressed in the words of the great voice out of heaven: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." In the New Jerusalem, God's people will walk in the light of the glory of God, and they shall see His face. Rev. 21:3; 22:4. God's covenant of friendship shall have been realized in its highest, heavenly perfection!

The deepest ground of this covenant relationship between God and man is the triune God Himself, of Whose triune life it is at the same time the highest revelation. For God is in Himself, apart from any relation to the creature, a covenant God. For He is one in Being, yet three in persons. The equality of the three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is absolute, for it rests in the oneness of the divine essence. One in being and nature, one in mind and will, one in all the essential and ethical virtues, in eternity and immensity, in immutability and independency, in simplicity and sovereignty, in knowledge and wisdom, in holiness and righteousness, in grace and beauty, in love and mercy,—absolutely one and equal are the three persons of the Godhead. In infinite perfection they enter into one another's nature and life. Each knows the others as He is known. Yet, they are personally distinct, and they possess each His own personal properties, as is expressed in their personal

names. The Father eternally subsists in the divine essence as Father, the Son as Son, the Holy Ghost as Spirit. And yet, also in their threeness they constitute a completeness, a unity, an exclusive whole or union. They belong together. No other person could possibly be conceived as added to that adorable threeness. The Father generates the Son and breathes forth the Spirit unto the Son; the Son is generated by the Father, and breathes forth the Spirit unto the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father the Son as the Spirit of the Father, and returns as the Spirit of the Son unto the Father. And on the basis of that absolute equality by personal distinction, the three persons of the Holy Trinity live an eternally perfect covenant life of friendship. The Father knows and beholds and loves the Son through the Spirit, the Son knows and loves and beholds the Father through the Spirit; the Holy Ghost, searching the depths of God, knows the Father through the Son in Himself. The covenant life of the triune God is the ultimate ground for the covenant relationship between God and the creature.

For, no doubt, Reformed theology is correct, when it emphasizes that the reason for and purpose of all the works of God *ad extra* is the glory of God. God wills to glorify Himself. And God's self-glorification is His self-revelation, the revelation of all His glorious and blessed virtues in the greatest possible creaturely measure, and on the highest possible plane. To this will to glorify Himself, and to reveal Himself in all the beauty of His adorable perfections, and in all the blessedness of His divine life, belongs His eternal purpose to reveal Himself in His blessed covenant life of eternal friendship. But how could this covenant life of God be revealed otherwise than unto and through a people that would have a place in His fellowship, to whom He would reveal His secrets, and that would be able to taste His marvellous love and grace? The triune God, therefore, from eternity determined to form a people that would have a creaturely place in the fellowship of the divine family. And if we must speak of a *pactum salutis*, or a covenant of peace (a conception, by the way, that, as it was developed in Reformed theology, i.e. as a pact between the three persons of the Trinity unto the salvation of the elect, has no ground in Scripture; partly, because the passage in Zech. 6:13 has no reference to such a pact, partly because the texts usually quoted in support of such an agreement within the Trinity speak of the covenant between God and Christ, rather than between the Father and the Son),—I would say, that it is the eternal purpose of the Triune God to reveal His own covenant life to the highest possible degree and on the highest possible plane, by establishing the covenant relation of friendship between Himself and His people.

But this required the formation of a people, of a creature, that would be in the highest possible creature-

ly measure like unto Himself. For, as we said, the bond of friendship presupposes a basis of likeness. Hence, God in His everlasting counsel, determines upon and conceives of a people that shall be conformed according to the image of His Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren. The first of these covenant creatures in the divine conception is the Christ, the Son of God in human flesh, and that, too, as the resurrected Lord! The risen Lord is the first-born of every creature in God's counsel. In Him the likeness of God is realized in the highest possible degree and measure. You understand that this means that I conceive of the counsel of God in a strictly supralapsarian light. History may be and, no doubt, is *infra* in its order of events; but God's eternal purpose and good pleasure dare not be conceived otherwise than according to the supralapsarian order. What is ultimate in history, or in the realization of God's good pleasure, is first in His eternal counsel. Not the first world, but the new creation is the goal from the beginning, because it is first in God's decree. Not the first covenant, but the eternal tabernacle of God on the heavenly plane has the first place in the counsel of God. Salvation is no repair work, but the realization of the eternal good pleasure of Him, Who knows all His works from the beginning. And since all things in the new world are concentrated in the glorified Son of God in the flesh, and He is the head of all things in that new world, and all things are created unto Him and for Him, we repeat with emphasis, that in the eternal good pleasure of God the risen and glorified Christ is the firstborn of every creature. In Him God wants to reveal His glory. He is the highest, central realization of that likeness to God which is the *conditio sine qua non* for the highest possible realization of God's covenant of friendship with men. This is the meaning of that marvellous passage in Col. 1:15 ff.: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."

With Him, then, the covenant of friendship is first of all established, and in the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ there is the highest possible creaturely likeness of God. And to Him are given all the elect, the sons whom God wants to lead to glory, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. They are chosen in Him, and unto Him. And they are

ordained to be conformed according to His image, in order that the covenant of friendship, centrally realized in the risen Lord, the Head of the Church, might be reflected in millions upon millions of sons of God, and so all might redound to the praise of the triune God. And what is more, unto Him and His Church all things in heaven and earth are given. For Christ is the Head of heaven and earth. In Him as the Head all things must be gathered together, and in God's counsel they are conceived as united in Him, so that the whole creation is a house of God, in Christ and through His Church the covenant of God embraces every creature, and all things must serve the new man in Christ, that he may serve his God. And unto that glorious realization of God's heavenly and all-embracing covenant, all things that are accomplished and must be accomplished in time are subordinated and made subservient, even creation and the fall, sin and death, reprobation as well as election. It must all serve the realization of God's everlasting covenant of friendship in Christ and His Church.

You understand that I am speaking now of the counsel of God, not of the order of things in time. If you bear this in mind, you will also discern the sharp difference between this and the Barthian "Theologie der Auferstehung" as presented by Walter Künneth in his book under that very title. He expresses a view similar to that presented above, but he refuses to proceed from a supralapsarian conception of the counsel of God, applies the truth that the risen Lord is the firstborn of every creature to creation and its development, and leaves the impression that creation culminates and reaches its perfection in the resurrection of Christ, and that, too, in the way of development and in virtue of an inherent "triebkraft" in creation as originally called into existence by the Word of God. Writes he: "Was Gottes Schöpfungswille bedeutet, is von Christus aus zu verstehen. Er ist nach der Kollloserbrieftheologie das 'Urbild' aller Kreatur". And while this may be understood in a sound sense, we cannot agree with the following: "Der Erstgeborene is noch nicht fertig, noch nicht am Ende seines ihm von Vater vorgezeichneten Weges. Auch der 'Sohn' trägt, wie gezeigt, eine Verheissung; es ist die Anwartschaft des Erstgeborenen auf Herrschaft. Der 'Sohn' ist angelegt auf den Empfang des Kyriostitels von Gott, der 'Sohn' wartet auf eine Existenz, die ihm noch Höheres als seine Sohnschaft verleiht. Die Sohnschaft des Christus wartet auf ihre Erfüllung in der Auferweckung. Ist die Auferstehung der Zielpunkt des Lebens des 'Sohnes', dann kann es für die Vollendung der Schöpfungswelt ihrer Christusgebundenheit gemäss keine andere Zielsetzung geben als die Auferstehung. Die Auferstehung Jesu wird damit zur Triebkraft der Schöpfung, zur inneren Dynamik des Schoöpfungswerdens." (26).

We can subscribe to this if we may interpret it as meaning that, when God created the first world, He had the second in view; when He formed the first Adam, He did so with a view to the last Adam, the Lord from heaven, the risen Christ, the firstborn of every creature. But if, as appears to be the intention, we must understand the author to mean that in the original creation as such there is a "*Triebkraft*", a power that urges it on to the resurrection of the Lord, we must differ from him radically. There is no *Triebkraft* in the first creation toward the risen Lord and the eternal covenant of God in the new creation. Between the first and the last Adam, between "*Schöpfung und Auferstehung*", between the first paradise and the eternal tabernacle of God with men, there lies the deep chasm of sin and death. This chasm was, no doubt necessary for, and, in God's counsel subservient unto the highest revelation of God's covenant of friendship in the risen Lord and His Church; but it nevertheless, separates, as far as historical development is concerned, the first world from the last, the culmination from the beginning. The original creation is an image of the new world that is to come, but it is not its beginning. The first man is the image of the second, but he can never develop into him. The chasm between the two can be abridged only by the wonder of grace, that has its central revelation in the incarnation of the Son of God, and, through His death, in the resurrection and glorification of Christ the Lord. It is not by the *Triebkraft* of the original creation, but by the irresistible power of the wonder of grace that all things are raised from their original earthly level, and that, too, through the depth of sin, death, and the curse, to the height of glory in God's eternal covenant of friendship!

History, or the realization of God's counsel, is *infra*. Creation is first, then sin, the fall, death, the curse; and thereupon the revelation of the risen Lord and redemption, salvation, final perfection and glorification. While in God's counsel the risen Christ is the firstborn of every creature, historically, Adam is the first man, Christ the second.

Hence, in the first paradise, we behold the first, the earthy realization of the covenant of friendship. That covenant was not an agreement between God and Adam, made sometime after his creation, as something new and additional, but it was the living bond of fellowship according to which Adam was the friend-servant of God, set over God's entire earthly house, so that all things must serve him that he might serve his God. And also this covenant relationship functioned *a parte hominis* on the basis of the fact that he was created in the image of God, in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Even as Adam in his nature reflected the nature and virtues of his Creator, so his relation to and life with God reflected from the

moment of his creation, the life of the Triune.

But Adam did not regard his exalted position. Through the instigation of Satan, he violated the covenant of God, and made himself worthy of His fierce anger, death and the curse. He dies and becomes corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins, an exile from the house of God; and in him all men, including the elect, the sons God had ordained unto Glory, fell into sin and death. There was no way out, as far as man's was concerned. As far as it lay in his power, he had destroyed the covenant of God. The return to the fellowship of God had, from man's viewpoint, become for ever impossible.

But man's impossibility is but God's medium for the revelation of His glorious grace. He had provided some better thing for us: the perfection of His covenant of friendship in Christ. Adam violated the covenant of God, but God maintains it. Adam and all the elect fall upon Christ that stood behind them according to God's eternal good pleasure. And now God at once reveals His covenant as it is eternally fixed in Christ. For He announces that He will put enmity between Satan and the woman, and between their seed, and that the cause of the Son of God shall have the victory. That covenant is to follow the antithetical line of election and reprobation. And for the revelation of this covenant of Christ in the elect, with its antithesis in the reprobate, the state is set in all creation. Man is subjected to temporal death, separated from the tree of life; the conception of the woman is multiplied, in order that Christ may come quickly as always, and her sorrow shall be great; the ground is cursed, and will produce thorns and thistles; not only will man eat his bread in the sweat of his face, but he will also eat and drink his own death; and the creature is made subject to vanity, so that all real culture by the fallen lord of the earthly creation is for ever become impossible. But upon that stage God reveals His covenant, and through that darkness He causes the light of the promise, the light that shines from the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to penetrate, filling the heirs of the promise with hope.

He reveals that covenant to Noah and his seed, as a covenant that embraces the whole creation, so that also the creature, groaning in the bondage of corruption, may look forward in hope to the glorious liberty of the children of God. He reveals that covenant to Abraham His friend, as running in the line of his generations, but as embracing, nevertheless, all the nations of the earth. He establishes that covenant at Sinai, placing it, however, under the law, in order that sin might abound, and under the taskmaster, the children of the promise might look the more earnestly for the *telos* of the law of Christ. And all through the dispensation of that covenant of Sinai, the powers of darkness and an adulterous people exerted themselves

to violate and to destroy the covenant of Jehovah; yet, in the fulness of time, He realized the covenant of friendship, uniting Himself with His people centrally in the incarnation, the Son of God come in the flesh, God of God tabernacling with us; laying the basis of righteousness in the atoning sacrifice and perfect obedience of the Servant of Jehovah; and raising the firstborn among many brethren, and the firstborn of every creature, from the dead, to exalt Him at His right hand in heavenly glory. He establishes that eternal bond of friendship in the new covenant, through the Spirit of the risen Lord, indwelling in the Church, by Whom He writes His law in their hearts, so that they all know Him, from the smallest to the greatest.

And still the counsel of God concerning His everlasting covenant is not finished. One more revelation of the wonder of grace is yet to be expected, when the glorified Son of God shall be revealed from heaven, the old things shall pass away, and all things shall be made new. Then He shall make our mortal bodies like unto His most glorious body, by the power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself; even creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption to participate in the glorious liberty of the children of God, and all things shall be made conformable to the glory of the risen Lord. The tabernacle of God shall be with men in heavenly glory, and as friend-servants in the house of God, a royal priesthood, we shall have perfect fellowship with the triune Jehovah, see Him face to face, know even as we are known, and taste and declare that the Lord is good for ever and ever!

H. H.

(26) W. Kunneth, *Die Theologie der Auferstehung*, pp. 151, 152.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Vanity Of Vanities

We turn to the second verse of the first chapter of Ecclesiastes and read, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

Doubtless, no other book in the Bible has suffered so many misapprehensions in a theological point of view, as the book of Ecclesiastes. It has been accused of many contradictions within itself, of being inconsistent, of lacking unity, and coherence on account of absence of plan and connection. The inspiration of its contents has been attacked. Very early this was doubted on account of the supposed moral levity and skepticism of its teachings—a skepticism that was said

to extend to a perfect despairing of all order and aim in human life. But these accusations are untrue. The book is consistent. It *has* plan and connection indeed. There is not a *single* contradiction to be found in it. If so, it could form no part of the infallible Scriptures. It was composed not in unbelief, but in a flowering faith. Its doctrine is pure, as only the doctrine of the infallible Word of God can be pure. And this book, too, holds forth to God's believing people the only comfort in life and death. The truth of these statements is born out by the sequence of this Bible book.

The fundamental thought of the book is set forth in its topic sentence—the sentence with which the Preacher begins his discourse—and which reads: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." This exclamation appears no less than twenty times, and is a paraphrase of the superlative idea, "extreme vanity." What may be the thought conveyed by this expression? Not, as some have imagined, that this world is in a state of continual flux, that, as Greek philosophy at one time affirmed, change, movement, is the Lord of the universe, even so completely, as to exclude the possibility of an unchanging substratum. Nor would it be correct to place in the room of the term vanity the word *sinful*, and read, "sinful, sinful, all is sinful". For the sacred writer views the things included in the "all" of the expression "all is vanity" from the angle, not of their sinfulness, but of their *vanity*. The meaning of the exclamation is precisely, that all is vanity, that is, empty, idle, useless, futile. But there is this question: What does the sacred writer, the preacher, include in this "all"? The answer is contained in the following verse. It reads, "What profit hath a man of all his labors which he taketh under the sun?" Thus the "all" in the exclamation "all is vanity" includes all the labor that man taketh under the sun, the whole of his daily pursuits, all his engagements of the hour, of the day, of whatever character and in whatever sphere of life, the sum and total of all man's occupations and strivings in whatever field of human endeavor—in the field of industry, science and invention, economics, philosophy, art and learnings, it makes no difference, absolutely no difference—all is vanity, idle, futile. This is truly an amazing appraisal of life, isn't it? of this natural, earthy life under the sun, as man in this present dispensation of the world lives it. It is terrifying—is this appraisal, in its depreciation and disparagement of all human endeavor. It provokes the question, "Is it true?" Taking cognizance of the Preacher's grounds upon which he bases his appraisal of all the labor that man taketh under the sun, we shall have to admit, whether we like to or not, that it is true. Let us have regard, then, to the preacher's grounds for this amazing appraisal of life, encountered in this Bible book. We can only touch upon these grounds, There is no time for delineation.

The first of these grounds is contained in the verse last quoted, "What profit hath a man from all his labor, which he taketh under the sun?" The question is rhetorical, and is thus equivalent in meaning to the positive statement, "Man hath absolutely no profit whatever from all his labors, which he taketh under the sun." All his labors are profitless, gainless, and on this account, vain, empty, futile. To be sure, the reaction of sinful flesh on hearing this is to decry the statement as absurdly untrue. But let us hearken unto the Preacher and be instructed.

Says the preacher: All man's labor is profitless, *because* one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, and, such is the thought conveyed, with the generation that passeth, there passeth also its works, its achievements, its learning, its systems of thought, the thing that men call civilization. All wax old and vanish away and the only thing that abideth is the earth. It all waxes old, becomes outmoded, and thus useless and vanishes away to be replaced, with the coming of the new generation, by new works, new systems of thought, a new civilization, which again in turn waxes old and disappears with the waxing old and disappearance of the generation that so recently came. Wrote the columnist, Ray Tucker, in his daily column of yesterday, I quote: "The arrival of the atomic bomb struck the braided gentlemen of the American Navy in their solar plexis, for it may mean the eventual abolition of such craft as battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. The fleet of the future may consist mainly of submarines and aircraft carriers."

Indeed, the new waxes old and is forgotten, but, mark you, the new is but the old, that again reappears in a new dress. It is not essentially new. Thus, it is true, what the preacher says in the sequence of his discourse, "The thing that has been, it is that which shall be: and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after." It all adds up to this: All man's labor is profitless indeed and therefore vain. For in all his endeavors man reaches no lasting goal, attains no enduring purpose; and the new is old. Man goes in circles. He is chained to a treadmill. In the language of the preacher, "Like the sun, he riseth, goeth down, and hasteneth to his place where he arose. Man is like the wind, that goeth toward the north, turneth about to the north. It whirl-eth continually and returneth again according to his circuits. Man is like the rivers, that run into the sea without ever filling it, and that return again unto the place whence they come. And so full of labor is man, that no tongue can utter it. Such is man's plight

in all his labor that he taketh under the sun, wherefore his labor is profitless and on this account vain.

Secondly, man's labor is profitless and therefore vain, because, says the preacher, in all his striving, he does not make straight and he cannot make straight, and he cannot even will to make straight, and he may not make straight, the crooked. There is then the crooked. Due to the entrance of sin into the world, and because the curse of God stalks the earth, and permeates man's existence, changing his day into night, life, this natural, earthy life, is crooked, disarranged, abnormal, dislocated, hectic, says the preacher. Wickedness, he saw, was in the place of judgment and iniquity in the place of righteousness. Then, says he, there are all the oppressions that are done under the sun and the tears of such as are oppressed and that have no comforter. Verily, the straight *has* been made crooked; and, mark you, God made it so, says the preacher. Can man, then, by all his labors, by all his effort, however mighty, make straight the crooked? Let us state the matter otherwise. Assuredly, the only cure, if there is any, but there is none for the men of man's world—I say, the only cure for oppression, the only cure for wickedness in the place of judgment, and iniquity in the place of righteousness, the only cure for war between the nations, the only cure for graft in government, for corruption in politics, and for dishonesty in business, the only cure for the class struggle between capital and labor, the only cure for the evil of divorce, juvenile delinquency, and crime in general,—I say, the only cure for all these evils, is the true fear of God in men's hearts. But can man administer this cure? Can he remove his stony heart by giving himself a heart of flesh? Can he establish within him and within his fellow man, God's heavenly kingdom and inscribe its laws upon the table of men's hearts? Can he cleanse a single depraved human from his native corruption, and create in him a new spirit? Can he shed abroad in men's hearts the love of God? In a word, can man make straight the crooked? If he can, why doesn't he? He cannot. He will not. Thus war will continue as long as the earth endureth, for God will make crooked the straight. Craft in government, corruption in politics, dishonesty in business, will continue as long as the earth endureth. Crime will continue as long as the earth endureth.

Well, then, if man stands utterly powerless over against all these evils, if by all his efforts he can bring in no improvement, what real profit hath man from all his labors that he taketh under the sun? None whatever. Says the preacher, so far is man from having profit from all his labors, that all they yield him is pain and vexation of spirit. We quote him, "Then I looked upon all the works that my hand had wrought, and on the labor that I have labored to do, and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and

there was no profit under the sun. Man's labor that he taketh under the sun, yields him no true happiness. After having done all, the great void in his life, in his spirit, is still there. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

But this is not all. Arriving at the end of his vain days on earth, vain man dies. Says the preacher, "I said in mine heart, concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might make manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts, for that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beasts, even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast; for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." This is the prospect that vain man faces. And says the preacher, "man must then leave his labor with all its earthy gains, unto the man that shall be after him. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?" Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beast. All turn to dust again." No, this is not the babbling of an unbeliever, denying life after death and the resurrection of the dead, but the inspired teachings of a preacher of God. Mark the statement, "That God might manifest men, and they might see that they themselves are beasts." This certainly, is not the prating of a skeptic but an exclamation of surprise and indignation of a true believer, struck with amazement and sorely vexed by the stupid blindness of the natural man, who will not, in his vain estate, seek after God, but who insists that this estate is the only and highest good, and that it will abide forever.

But let us understand the preacher well. Certainly, it is not gnostic heresy and anabaptist philosophy with which we deal in this Bible book. It is not grace that is being opposed here to nature, as if nature, man's earthy estate, all his labor that he taketh under the sun were as such depraved, sinful, as to its essence, and therefore contemptible. To the contrary, says the preacher, there is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labors. This also I saw that it was from the hand of God. For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, but to the sinner he giveth travail. Eating and drinking, buying and selling, marital and family life as such are not corrupt. Only as the labor of fallen and depraved man is it wicked indeed, thoroughly so.

Nor is it the teaching of the preacher further, that, whereas all man's labor that he taketh under the sun is vain, the thing for the believer to do, is to give up his labor and retreat into monastic seclusion. Though all man's labor under the sun is vanity, man must labor, he must travail. It is calling, duty. Says the preacher, whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with

thy might; for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest. Man must labor. It is that, says the preacher, which God hath given the sons of men to do, to be exercised thereby. *This*, says the preacher, is the conclusion of the matter, "Fear God and keep his commandments," or, in the language of the New Testament Scriptures, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and through him, in his Father the triune Jehovah, and walk all the days of thy vanity as a child of the light." This God's people, by God's mercy, and by the power of His grace, and under the constraint of a faith, that is His gift, also do, in principle. And so all things, thus also this vain earthy estate, and all the crooked that characterizes this estate, worketh together for good to them. And from the vain estate of this sinfully earthy, they even now are in principle delivered. And their works shall follow theme. And when the house of this their earthy tabernacle shall be dissolved, and with it their vain earthy estate shall be dissolved, they receive from God a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,—a house in which nothing is crooked, but in which everything is straight with the straightness of a heavenly perfection,—a house in which they face always, not life through the grave, for then they shall have passed through the grave, but just life—life everlasting, life with God in His sanctuary, where they shall see God with heavenly eyes and thus see him as He is, and where He shall satisfy them with His likeness.

G. M. O.

THROUGH THE AGES

The Fundamental Principle Of Reformed Church Polity

The father of Reformed Church Polity is John Calvin. It was he, who, through his insistence on the legal parity of the office-bearers in the church, levelled, conceptionally, the Roman hierarchy to the ground and restored to the church its offices. The Roman Hierarchy, in its completed form, was an imposing structure. It rose, from the lower clergy as its base, through rank upon rank of dignitaries of always greater power, to its apex, the pope, the father of all, the vicegerent of Christ on earth. But this structure was a far cry from the pattern of church

organization that Christ, the Lord of the Church, had shown the apostles on the mount of God and had laid down in the Scriptures. With the place of Christ, in the church, usurped by the episcopacy, as headed by the pope, the people of God were in bondage. Chained body and soul were they to the Roman hierarchy by a great fear of its thunderings. For the belief was general that the keys of the kingdom of heaven had been placed by Christ in the hands of the pope and bishops, so that the pope was handling these keys, and could, as he chose, put men in heaven or send them into everlasting desolation. The preaching by the church so registered in men's mind, that this was the conclusion that was being drawn. And the fault lay with the teachers in the church. They were obscuring the truth by the vain philosophies of men. Then God sent deliverance, through His long suppressed gospel, as preached by a lowly monk, Martin Luther, that the power to forgive sin is solely Christ's and that justification is by faith in Christ. The spell that hierarchy had thrown over the hearts and consciences of men was broken, and God's people were free. There was courage now, and much of it, to cast off Rome's yoke, the false belief that there is no salvation apart from the Roman hierarchy having been dissolved by the glow of the truth. However, in more than one land, the Reformation, in the point of view of Church Polity, amounted to nothing more than an exchange of the pope for the king of the state. It was in Geneva, Switzerland, the place of labor of Calvin, that the Reformation first came to its own, through this reformer's teaching of the legal parity of those whom the Scriptures describe as bishops, presbyters, pastors and teachers, and through the teaching that, under Christ, the sole legal power in the church is the teaching and ruling ministry. For, though Calvin held firmly to the view, that the office of civil magistrate is also to protect the sacred ministry and to remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship, he was unwilling, that the civil magistrate should have an atom of power in the church. Calvin, as was said, is the father of Reformed Church Polity.

Let us now set forth this polity in its essential features and thereupon delineate its cardinal principles. The essential features of Reformed Church Polity—the polity that, according to our firm belief, was laid down in God's Word—are these. 1st) There is the church, the *Ecclesia ideam*, as God sees her in His counsel, the church chosen and, by virtue thereof, called, justified, and glorified in Christ Jesus her head, before the foundation of the world, and as such including quantitatively all the elect and qualitatively all the benefits of Christ's atonement. 2nd) There is the church visible and universal, under the gospel, consisting of all the believers and their seed in every nation on this earth, in organical union with Christ through

their living and indestructible faith, and leading their life in the family, state and society, as subjectively impelled by the inner principle of faith and objectively adhering to the law of God's Word. 3rd) Because the gospel must be proclaimed, Christ, through the agency of His believing people, erects *that* organization to which is given the name "Church Institute,"—or church organization—an organization through whose ruling and teaching ministry the body of Christ, which is the church, functions as Christ's official proclama-tor of the gospel, in order that Christ's body may be perfected and edified, the church gathered, and the covenant extended. This organization is the church institute, the local congregation. As to kind, it is one. As to number it is many, necessarily so, as it is physically impossible for the immense number of believers in every nation to meet in one place. 4th) There is but one order in this ministry, and all ministers are peers, each of the other. 5th) The distinctive mark of a true minister is not apostolic succession but the call of God through the congregation to the work of preaching a pure gospel. 6th) In each particular church, the elders are associated together as a presbytery or consistory and thus exercise authority, not as individuals, but as an organized body. Every congregation therefore is ruled by a council of elders and pastors, elected by the people under the supervision of the consistory, ordained by ministers and presided over by the pastor of the congregation. 7th) Reformed Church Polity also provides for broader gatherings than that of the consistory, to which the Church Order of Dordrecht gives the names of classis, synod, and general synod respectively. The classis is composed of all the ministers within a limited area with the addition of an elder from each congregation. The synod and general synod are but larger classis, necessitated by the extent of any denomination. This is reformed church polity in its essential features.

Now certainly there is more than one fundamental principle discoverable in this polity. There are five such principles discernible. They are: 1st. The Lordship of Christ over all things in His church. 2nd. The divine origin of the authority of the ruling and teaching ministry. 3rd. The priesthood of the believers. 4th. The autonomy of the local congregation. 5th. The binding power of classical and synodical decisions.

These five principles are the very pillars of Reformed Church Polity. They give to this polity its distinctive character. In their totality, they form the line of demarcation between the reformed system on the one hand and all other systems on the other. And though they may receive no direct statement in any reformed ecclesiastical constitution, they are implicit in the body of rules of all such constitutions of which to us the best known is the Church Order of the International Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-19, the Church

Order on the basis of which also the Protestant Reformed Churches are organized. However, of these five basic principles, that of the Lordship of Christ over His Church, is the chief. It is the governing principle of the five. Yet, in setting forth what is peculiar to Reformed Church Polity, we shall have to give room in our discussion also to the other four, as I now explain that system of ecclesiastical polity that bears the name of Reformed, set forth this system in its true light and full significance and show that it is the only system that has the support and the sanction of Scripture. Let us then address ourselves to the task of the moment.

The 1st principle. The Kingship of Christ over all things in His Church.

Christ is king of His Church, so the Scriptures teach us. God set Him, His King, upon His holy hill of Zion, Ps. 2:6. He reigns over the house of Jacob, and of His kingdom there shall be no end, Luke 1:33. God raised Him up from the dead and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Eph. 1:23. Christ is the head of the church and the saviour of the body, and the church is subject to him, Eph. 5:23, 24. Let us give the literal words of the Scriptures here, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." It is plain that the term head in this Scripture signifies the legal relation of supremacy and subordination and is thus here being used as equivalent in meaning to the word king. Now the kingship of the glorified Christ includes also, to be sure, his Lordship over all things in the entire cosmos, over all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, so that all things are under his feet, where God put them, when He raised the Christ of God from the dead, and set him at His own right hand in the heavenly places and crowned Him Lord of lords and King of kings—thus Lord of each and every potentate on the earth, who, though they now rule by His authority—for all power is his—and though they, together with absolutely all things, are in His hands, so that they cannot move except by His direction, nevertheless rage, imagine a vain thing, set themselves and take counsel together, against him, the Lord, God's anointed, wherefore he shall break them with a rod of iron. This mighty Christ is at once King of His church. King is he over all things in His church by His Spirit and His grace, wherefore His church is His domain of grace in contradistinction to the world—man's world—where he reigns with a rod of iron, in the midst of His enemies. But in the treatment of our subject, we must concentrate directly

on the kingship of Christ over His Church. The character of this kingship must be discerned. Christ is king *alone*, under God. He is the *only* king of His church, which means that He is *wholly* without colleagues with whom He shares His authority. *All* power was vested in *Him* alone. Such is the teaching of the Scriptures. Said Christ, "unto *me* hath been given *all* power in heaven and on earth." Thus, the church is not an oligarchy, that is, a kingdom in which the power is vested in a *few*, who stand shoulder to shoulder with Christ, but a monarchy is the church, so utterly absolute that Christ, as king, is not only without a peer but without a single assistant among men. To be sure, the church has its ruling and teaching ministry. But the elders in the church are not partners of Christ, co-laborers, with Him in His kingdom, his helpers in the management of the house of God, on a level with him. This were impossible. What are the rulers in the church apart from Christ? They are nonentities apart from Christ. Sinners they are, guilty and ill-deserving, dead through their trespasses, without strength, by nature wholly evilly disposed toward Christ and all that is of Christ. What have they as servants of Christ, that they have not received from God through Christ? He is their very life. Without Him they can do nothing. It is He who raises them up and prepares them unto the office to which He calls them and in which they function solely as His agents and by His authority. The rulers in the church are co-laborers together not with Christ but only with one another and *unto* Christ and through Christ unto God. For the church has not kings but a king, the king, the Lord Jesus. Under the triune Jehovah, His Father, He is the only, the supreme king of the church, set over all things in the church.

If the church is not an oligarchy, much less is it a democracy in the accepted sense of this term. For the government of the church is not of men; it is of God. Christ, certainly, rules not by the will of the members in the church; He rules by the will of God. He owes His position in the church not to man but solely to God. God sent Him into the world in our flesh, bruised Him for our iniquities, raised Him up and set Him at His own right hand, and gave him to be the head over all things in the church, which is His body. What bearing this principle of the kingship of Christ must have on the matter of the polity of the church, is not difficult to see. If Christ, under God, is the king of the church in that absolute sense, it must be that this polity is of him through the Scriptures, and not of men, not of the ruling and teaching ministry in the church. For it can easily be seen that the polity of the church is not a matter of indifference or of minor importance. Its importance is of the first magnitude. Consider that the church, which is the body of Christ, has a calling in the world. She is the

city upon a hill, the light of the world, the salt of the earth. Her calling is to let her light shine, to confess under the impulse of her faith and under the constraint of the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of her members, the name of Christ. When this is done, through the rulings and teaching ministry in the church, it is official preaching of the gospel, and then the body of Christ is perfected and edified, the church gathered, and the covenant extended. The calling of the church is not to labor for the uplift of humanity or for the improvement of the condition of life of the men of the present dispensation of this world, but her sole calling is to raise and hold high the banner of her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That is her office. Now, certainly, the proper functioning of the church in this office has everything to do with the polity of the church. If that polity is unbecoming to the church, it restrains her from free action, contracts and confines her, and the result is, that her spiritual life suffers. Such a polity eventually works havoc in the church. The truth of this statement is born out by the proverbial spiritual stagnation and mental apathy, the superstition, ignorance and corruption, that characterized the Roman Catholic Church at the dawn of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. History shows that a communion of churches with a flourishing spiritual life and a corrupt church polity, ecclesiastical constitution, is a nonentity; and history also proves, that when a communion of churches, whose polity is pure, departs, by common consent, from the principles thereof, it has broken, in the heart of its disposition, with the truth all along the line. Church Order, certainly, is not a mere technicality, if by technicality is meant an action or rule without ethical implication, that can be ignored with impunity as sinful convenience dictates. To maintain the contrary is to fly in the face of facts and to be willingly ignorant of the lessons of history.

It ought to be plain how true it must be, that Christ received authority also to provide His church with a polity for her institutional life. He is sole Lord over all things in His church. The polity of the church is of Christ.

As instructed by the Lord of the church, the apostles set God's house in order. And the church institute that they erected, stands before us in the New Testament Scriptures, as having, to be sure, normative value. But there always have been some to deny this. Their argument is, that the church formation of the apostles was determined by the political and social conditions of the times. The apostolic churches, it is said, had to do with a hostile state from which they could expect no favors. This gave rise, it is maintained, to a church formation independent of the state. And so, too, was the rise of the monarchical bishop, in after-years, necessitated by the exigencies

of the hour. This hierarchical power, it is said, was right and proper for the church of that day. The principle of thought that underlies this reasoning is, that it can be said of no type of church formation, that it alone is adapted to the nature and function of the church. The church must make a choice, and in choosing must allow herself to be guided by the emergencies of the hour that beset her. Hence, the Lutherans, perceiving that the church could not maintain herself without the aid of a friendly state, did well in giving the civil magistrate a hand in her government. Such is the reasoning of the exponents of the so-called historical-comparative method. This reasoning and this method, very popular in our day and age, must be rejected. Church polity, as to its principles of truth, has but one source, which is, not history but the infallible Scriptures. This precisely is what it means that Christ is Lord over all things in his church.

(to be continued)

G. M. O.

SION'S ZANGEN

Wondere Veiligheid

(Psalm 91; Derde Deel)

We hebben gezien, dat Christen veilig is onder de vleuglen Gods. We hebben, echter, ook gezien, dat het in den diepsten zin hier gaat over Messias. Die wondere Schriftuur! Hoe meer we haar bestudeeren, hoe meer we de schoonheid, de schitterende deugden van God zien in het aangezicht van Christus Jezus, den Heere.

U zal geen kwaad wedervaren, en geene plaag zal Uwe tent naderen.

Komt daar even in, wilt ge? Klinkt het niet alsof deze tekst bedoeld moest zijn voor een geheel andere wereld dan de onze? Is het niet juist het kind Gods, dat klaagt vanwege al het kwaad, dat hij ervaart? Luistert naar Jakob: Weinig en kwaad zijn de dagen der jaren mijns levens geweest! En Asaf dan? Hij klaagt: Dewijl ik den ganschen dag geplaagd ben, en mijne bestraffing is er alle morgens! Jakob spreekt van kwade dagen en Asaf spreekt van plaging, terwijl mijn tekst hier zegt: U zal geen kwaad wedervaren, en geene plaag zal Uwe tent naderen! Hoe kan men dat harmonieeren?

Hier is het antwoord: Jakob en Asaf spraken eerst naar den mensch, naar het vleesch, naar aardse normen. En dan is het waar: dan zijn onze dagen kwaad en zijn er groote plagen. Het is zoo erg, dat wij alle

dagen gedood worden en geacht als schapen ter slachting.

Evenwel, luistert eens naar Asaf als hij staat in de heiligdommen Gods! Dan zegt hij heel gerust: Bezwijkt mijn vleesch en mijn hart, zoo is God de rotssteen mijns harten en mijn deel in eeuwigheid. En als het kwade zoo erg wordt bij Jakob, dat hij bijna sterft, dan roept hij triumphantelijk uit: Op Uwe zaligheid wacht ik, o Heere! Let er toch op, dat ge al deze vreemde teksten moet beoordeelen vanuit het licht van het eerste vers: Die in de schuilplaats des Allerhoogsten is gezeten, die zal vernachten in de schaduw des Almachtigen. Let er op, dat als we staan midden in de heiligdommen Gods, dan zeggen met Paulus: In dit alles zijn wij meer dan overwinnaars, door Christus die ons liefgehad heeft.

Want Hij zal Zijne engelen van u bevelen, dat zij u bewaren in alle uwe wegen.

Dat is mooi. De engelen Gods zijn onze bewaarders!

Het is jammer, dat wij als Gereformeerde Kerken, sindsdien we ontkwamen aan de gruwelen van Rome, in een ander uiterste gevallen zijn: we spreken haast nooit over de engelen Gods. Rome maakte te veel van de engelen; wij spreken er bijna niet meer van. En toch is de Bijbel vol van de leer der engelen.

Ja, de Heere beveelt Zijne engelen van ons.

Ziet het hoe die engelen zeer druk zijn wanneer het kindeke Jezus in de wereld komt. Ze jubelen in de velden van Efratha. Ze omringen Hem in de woestijn. We lezen er van: Toen liet de duivel van Hem af: en zie, de Engelen zijn toegekomen en dienden Hem!

De eeuwigheid zal het straks openbaren, dat de Engelen Jezus bewaard hebben in al Zijne wegen. Hij was der Engelen heer. Ze hebben Hem zeer lief.

Doch, laat ons het niet vergeten, de engelen dienen ons ook; er is voor ons een bewaring door middel van engelen. Het hoe van die bewaring weten we niet, maar dat ze er zijn tot onze hulpe is zeker.

Het volgende vers zegt wat van het hoe: zij zullen U op de handen dragen, opdat gij Uwen voet aan geen en steen stoot.

Later heeft de duivel geprobeerd om tot Jezus te prediken over dezen tekst. Hij zeide: Werpt Uzelven gerust van de hoogte des tempels! Want er staat immers geschreven: "dat Hij Zijnen engelen van U bevelen zal, en dat zij U op de handen zullen nemen, opdat Gij niet te eeniger tijd Uwen voet aan eenen steen stoot!"

Doch het was een valsche preek. Hij wilde den Heere aanzetten om Zijn God te verzoeken. Bovendien, het vermorzeld worden door een natuurlijken, physischen steen of rots is niet zoo erg. In den tekst onder discussie gaat het niet over den natuurlijken aanstoot vanwege natuurlijke steenen. O neen. Het gaat over den aanstoot der geestelijke dingen. Het gaat over het stooten aan een steen die geestelijk is.

Daarvan zullen de engelen Gods U afhelpen. Zij zullen U ondersteunen. En ge zult Uwen weg verder reizen met blijdschap.

Het resultaat van die Goddelijke ondersteuning vanwege Zijne Engelen is grootsch: "op den fellen leeuw en de adder zult gij treden, gij zult den jongen leeuw en den draak vertreden!"

We zullen wel doen, om ook hier eerst aan Jezus te denken. En zien, dat het heerlijk vervuld is.

De leeuw en de draak zijn de duivel. Ik denk, dat ge dat wel zult zien.

De leeuw zooals de Heere hem maakte in den vroegen morgen der historie is goed en schoon en schitterend in zijn kracht, schoonheid en majesteit als koning der dieren. Doch de leeuw, nadat de Heere het aardrijk en het dierenrijk vloekte om des zondaars wil is verscheurend en doodend. En de leeuw, na den val, is beeld van den duivel in Gods Woord. Zoo lezen we immers, dat de duivel rondwaart als een briesende leeuw zoekende wie hij zou mogen verslinden. De duivel is, als de leeuw, en moordenaar geworden.

En de duivel is ook vergeleken bij den draak, de oude slang. Zoo treedt hij immers op in het eerste paradijs en hij verzoekt den mensch in zijn slangachtige valscheid.

Nu dan, tegen het valsche en de valschen zal de Heere U beschutten. En het schijnt hier wel, alsof de Engelen Gods daarbij dienst doen. We zullen, evenwel, moeten wachten tot den dag van Christus, om uit te vinden juist hoe die bewaring door Engelen plaats vond.

Doch we weten nu al, dat niets wat tegen ons gesmeed wordt door den duivel succes zal hebben: we zullen den draak immers vertreden.

Dewijl Hij mij zeer bemint, spreekt God, zoo zal Ik Hem uithelpen; Ik zal Hem op een hoogte stellen, want Hij kent Mijnen naam!

Welnu, wat dunkt U van dezen tekst? Klinkt dat niet pelagiaansch? De liefde van het object in den psalm wordt door God bemind, omdat hij den Heere bemint?

En toch zullen we het laten staan. Er zit allerlei schoons in.

Eerst, moeten we wel voor den aandacht houden, dat God alleen aangetrokken wordt door het ware, het goede, het schoone, het heerlijke, het heilige, het zondige. De Heere haat altijd het kwade, het zondige, het vuile, het onheilige. Laat ons nimmermeer vergeten, dat de Heere nooit den zondaar mint als zondaar! Dat kan Hij niet. Let er toch op, dat als onder ons menschen, iemand intiem omgaat met vuile en leelijke sujetten, dan zeggen we terecht: soort zoekt soort! Als ge iemand van Uw kennissen ziet lachen en spreken met iemand van wien ge weet, dat hij een laag persoon is, dan valt dat U direkt tegen, dan voelt ge U gekwetst, dan zegt ge tegen Uw kennis: hoe kunt

ge dat doen? Die man past niet bij U! En dat gevoelt en zegt ge terecht.

Hoeveel te meer is dat zoo bij God, die zóó heilig van oogen is, dat Hij het kwade niet kan aanschouwen; zóó goed en lieflijk, dat zelfs de heilige engelen hunne aangezichten met vleuglen bedekken voor het aangezicht van God!

Tweedens, moet ge weten, dat in den diepsten zin psalm 91 van toepassing is op Jezus Christus!

In psalm 91 ziet God den Christus in de diepte des eeuwigen doods, waar Hij uit pure, reine, volmaakte liefde ingegaan is om den Heere gehoorzaam te zijn. En als God dat ziet, dan zegt Hij: Wijl Hij Mij zeer bemint, zoo zal Ik Hem uit de onderste hel ophalen. Ik zie het in Mijn Zoon, Jezus Christus, Hij kent Mijn Naam! Dat wil zeggen: Hij heeft Mijn naam, dat is, Mijn openbaring van Mijzelf, lief!

Derdens, als die Jezus met Zijn Gode liefhebbend hart in u woont, dan heeft God U ook lief en dan om Jezus' wil!

Vierdens, die Jezus heeft God zoo intens liefgehad, dat Hij al de zonden voor U betaald en al de gerechtigheid voor U verworven heeft. En zoo doende zal God U steeds doen gevoelen, dat ge door Hem bemind wordt.

En, eindelijk, dit is van eeuwigheid. Het is niet zoo geworden in een zeker punt des tijds, doch is zoo van eeuwigheid tot in eeuwigheid. Jezus en die van Jezus zijn ziet God van eeuwigheid in volmaaktheid, alsof Zijn volk nooit gezondigd had. Zegt hier maar gerust: Hallelujah!

En zoo wordt Jezus en die van Jezus zijn op een hoogte gezet.

Het gaat hier over den hemel. Ook vindt ge die theologie overal in den Bijbel. Ge hoort er van in den vroegen morgen der historie. Die hoogte is getypeerd in allen altaar. Het altaar is de aarde verhoogd tot in den hemel toe. Het altaar als centrum in den Tempel Gods, arke des verbonds genaamd, is den hemel daarboven bij God.

Dat komt straks. Zelfs Jezus heeft die hoogte nu nog niet beklommen. Alles heerlijks wat in dezen tekst zit is nog met dienzelfden Christus verborgen in God. Dat komt er straks ten volle uit in den dag van Christus. Dan zal de Heere die hoogte doen zien in een nieuwen hemel en een nieuwe aarde waarin gerechtigheid wonen zal.

Tot zoo lang zullen we tot God roepen uit groote diepten.

Zoo deed Jezus het ook.

Leest het maar: Hij zal Mij aanroepen, en Ik zal Hem verhooren; in de benauwdheid zal Ik bij Hem zijn, Ik zal Hem er uittrekken en zal Hem verheerlijken.

Merkt het op, hoe ge heel wat Nieuw Testamenteische feesten in dit vers beluistert. In profetie natuurlijk. Hij roept God aan uit de benauwdheid: dat

is het bange roepen vanaf het kruis, vanuit den eeuwigen dood: dat is Uw goeden Vrijdag!

Ik zal Hem er uit trekken: dat is de Opstanding!

En zal Hem verheerlijken: dat is ten eerste, de hemelvaart; ten tweede, het zitten aan 's Vader's rechterhand; ten derde, de instorting des Heiligen Geestes.

Ja, de Heere God heeft Zijn Woord gestand gedaan. En ook aan ons.

Wij zijn met Hem gekruisigd aan ons vleesch en aan de wereld. Wij zijn verreezen uit den dood in de wedergeboorte en de bekeering. Wij hebben onzen wandel in den hemel waar Christus is. En wij ontvangen van Zijn heerlijkheid door den Geest die ons is gegeven. En we zien visioenen van een nimmer eindigende eeuwigheid van ongekende zaligheid.

O ja, de Heere heeft Zijn Woord gestand gedaan, ook aan ons.

Luistert nu nog even naar de laatste klanken van dit Goddelijk lied: "Ik zal Hem met langheid der dagen verzadigen, en Ik zal Hem Mijn heil doen zien!"

Langheid der dagen: wie snakt er niet naar? Zelfs wij die al leelijker worden alnaarmate we de jaren vermeerderen. Het leven is zoet zegt men.

Langheid der dagen in mijn tekst is de eeuwigheid. God belooft hier de eeuwigheid aan Zijn Zoon. Hij lag gekneld in banden van den dood, waar de angst der eeuwige hel Hem allen troost deed missen. En dan zegt God: Ik zal U er uithelpen en waar ge het tegenoverstelde van langheid der dagen gesmaakt hebt, zoo zal Ik Uw dagen verlengen tot in de eeuwigheid toe.

En wij met Hem. Zalig is hij die in Jezus is: die gaat met Hem een eeuwigen gelukstaat tegemoet.

En Ik zal Hem Mijn heil doen zien.

Let er op: God zal Jezus heil, het heil van God, doen zien. Klinkt dat niet vreemd? Noemen we Jezus niet de Heiland? Houdt dat niet in, dat Jezus de oorsprong is van het heil?

O neen!

De oorsprong van het heil is God, te prijzen tot in eeuwigheid. Luistert naar Paulus: "En alle deze dingen zijn uit God!" Het heil is des Heeren!

Jezus zaligheid bestaat ook hierin, dat Hij Gods heil mag zien. Wat beteekent dat? Het beteekent, dat Hij al de heerlijkheid van den Aanbiddelijken mag zien. Het heil is de volheid van God's heerlijke Wezen. Net maar God te zien, is de hemel.

En wij met Hem.

Ook wij mogen God's heil straks zien. We zien het nu al, Heere. We smaken het ook. Daarom klagen we: Ach wanneer? Zal ik naad'ren voor Uw oogen, in Uw huis Uw naam verhoogen?

Nu veegen we de tranen weg, doch straks zullen we juichen, juichen!

IN HIS FEAR

Our Baptism Form (3)

The Baptism Form speaks of baptism as a sign, but also as a seal of our entrance into God's covenant. It does this by inference when it states that "Holy baptism witnesseth and sealeth unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ." It speaks of baptism as a sign and seal of the cleansing from sin. And since through the cleansing from sin we are separated from the world and taken into God's covenant, baptism is a sign and seal of our entrance into the covenant. It speaks also directly of this fact by saying, "God the father witnesseth and sealeth unto us that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us." And later, ". . . since baptism is a seal and undoubted testimony that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God."

At this point the question might be raised, to whom does baptism seal the entrance into God's covenant? This question persistently demands an answer, the more so because we receive the sacrament of baptism already in our earliest infancy, and both Scripture and experience teach that many receive the sacrament who are nevertheless not included in the covenant. Since we naturally meet this question later when we discuss the baptism of infants, let it suffice here to say that baptism is a seal to the believer. In baptism God assures the heirs of salvation, and them only, that He justifies them by faith, thereby taking them into His covenant life. Romans 4:11 tells us that Abraham, the father of believers, received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness which is by faith. And only by an act of true and living faith can the believer embrace the promise of God with a ready heart. It is the believer who makes confession of this assurance of faith in the Form. Only the believer can say, "holy baptism witnesseth and sealeth unto us."

To quote the whole paragraph under discussion, the Form goes on to say, "Therefore we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God. In like

manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal."

It is by no means accidental that the Form introduces the names of the three persons of the Holy Trinity in this connection. Evidently this is taken from the formula for baptism given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19; "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This is the more significant because it refers us to the very essence of the covenant, which has its source in the trinity itself.

Essentially God's covenant of friendship is realized in Himself. God is the fulness of infinite blessedness, entirely sufficient in Himself, so that He has no need of men's hands to be worshipped by them. Nor does He need man in order to realize His covenant. God IS light, life, grace and truth, and God is also the all-sufficient covenant God in His own glorious essence. This is true just because God is the triune God, one in essence, yet subsisting in the three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although there is always perfect harmony and unbroken unity among the three persons, the Father wills and works and lives as Father, the Son as Son, and the Holy Spirit as Spirit, also within the divine Being. It is the peculiar work of the Father that He generates the Son and breathes forth the Holy Spirit as Spirit of the Father. The Son draws His life from the Father and breathes forth the Holy Spirit as Spirit of the Son. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son. In Him the Father and the Son meet, for He is always engaged in searching the depths of God. In the Spirit the Father meets the Son as the exact image of His likeness and says in love, "My Son." The Son in turn meets the Father, Whose likeness He bears, and says to Him in love, "My Father." Thus the three persons of the holy trinity live a life of perfect unity and harmony within the divine Being. They love one another, seek one another, and delight in the fellowship of one another. In covenant friendship they think and will and work; as it is so remarkably expressed in connection with the creation of God's image bearer, Gen. 1:26, "And God said, let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." That can only mean that the eternal covenant God makes man a covenant creature. The exclusive family life of father, mother and child is but a natural, earthly picture of the eternal covenant life which God lives within His own Being.

From this follows that it is very really *God's* covenant. It is entirely in harmony with Scripture to

speak of God's covenant, for God Himself repeatedly refers to it as "My covenant." To mention a few places, see Gen. 6:18; 9:9; 17:2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 19; Ps. 89:34. In other passages it is referred to as "the covenant of the Lord", as in Deut. 4:23; or "the covenant of God", Ps. 78:10; or "His covenant", Ps. 103:18. It is God's covenant primarily because the covenant has its source in His divine Being. It is of fundamental importance that we always bear this in mind, for God does not become a covenant God by establishing His covenant with man, but He is Jehovah, the I AM, the eternal, unchangeable and all-sufficient covenant God in Himself. When God establishes His covenant with us He merely takes us into His covenant life to share in and enjoy His blessedness forever. But it is also God's covenant because God establishes it. The covenant is never a contract or agreement drawn up between God and man as opposite parties. That is, the covenant is never in any sense bilateral, but always unilateral, representing the work and glory of the living God. It is all of God, of Whom, through Whom and unto Whom are all things forever. Therefore the language of Scripture always is, "I will establish MY covenant." See such passages as Gen. 6:18; 9:9; 17:7; Ex. 6:4; Ps. 89:3.

This should be sufficient evidence that Scripture knows nothing of various covenants, but only of one. Such terms as 'covenant of works', 'covenant of nature' and 'covenant of grace' are foreign to the Scriptures, and have been occasion in the past of destroying the unity of the one covenant of God. Biesterveld makes the remark in "Ons Gereformeerde Kerkboek", that the expression 'covenant of grace' was not found in the earliest editions of our Baptism Form, but was a later interpolation. The fathers spoke simply of 'an eternal covenant', which evidently was better. Although God's covenant passes through various phases in its historical manifestation throughout the history of this world, it nevertheless is, and always remains the same covenant from paradise until its complete realization in heaven.

This becomes increasingly evident if we bear in mind that God centrally establishes His covenant with no one else but Christ. "For it has pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Col. 1:19. He is the Firstborn of every creature, the Firstborn from the dead and the Head of the Body, that in all things He might have the preeminence. Col. 1:15-18. According to the purpose of His will God has determined to gather together all things in heaven and on earth under one head, even in Christ. Eph. 1:10. God has exalted Him far above all principality and power and might in this world and in the world to come, and has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to the Church as Head over all things. Eph. 1:21, 22. Of Christ, as He was typified in David, the Psalmist of Psalm 89

said, "I have made My covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My Servant, Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah. Also I will make Him My Firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for Him forevermore, and My covenant shall stand fast with Him." This promise was fulfilled when Christ arose and ascended to heaven, and reaches its ultimate fulfillment when God unites all things in Christ in the new creation.

But God establishes His covenant with Christ as the Head of His church. He has chosen us in Christ from before the foundation of the world. Eph. 1:4. He has given Christ to the Church as the Head of the body. Eph. 1:22, Col. 1:18. When God raised Christ from the dead and exalted Him with glory and honor in the heavens, God blessed Christ with all spiritual blessings which He had prepared for Him, and Christ is the reservoir which in turn pours out these blessings upon His Church, even as God has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. Eph. 1:3, 4. The Church will share the full blessedness of God's own covenant life when she is perfectly united with Christ before the throne in glory. God's covenant will then be fully realized, for it is not simply a means to an end, but it is an end in itself, since God takes His people unto Himself to joy in His fulness forever.

Therefore God's covenant with Adam in paradise was but an earthly reflection of the perfect realization in heaven. Adam stood at the head of the whole human race in paradise to prepare the way for the ultimate realization still to come. The line of God's covenant runs through the history of this world according to sovereign election, from Adam to Seth, from Seth to Noah, from Noah and Shem to Abraham, from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob to Judah, whose tribes becomes the chief in Israel. From Judah the covenant line centers in David, who sits on God's throne over Israel. The seed of David occupies that throne forever, for that promised seed is the Christ, Whose throne is established in the heavens. Thus Christ is born of David's lineage, from the virgin Mary, the last remnant of the house of David. From Christ the line extends to all the elect believers of every nation and tribe and tongue to all the ends of the earth, even until the end of time.

God is always busy throughout the history of this present time establishing and realizing His covenant. God is always engaged in revealing Himself to us as our covenant God, the God of our salvation. For it is very really God's covenant. It is all of God. Infinite wisdom, sovereign good pleasure and unfathomable love have prepared a place in that covenant for us. Almighty, irresistible grace draws us into living fellowship with the living God. The sign and seal of

which we receive in baptism already in our earliest infancy. God Himself assures us as heirs of His salvation, "I will be thy God, and thou shalt be My people." By grace we say: "O my God, Whom to know is eternal life!" He who glories, let him glory in God.

C. H.

FROM HOLY WRIT

The Convicting Office Of The Spirit

The Apostle John is known for the depth of his thought and understanding of the words of Christ.

This reveals itself especially in the fact that he seems to have chosen to record at length some of the more extensive discourses of Christ, whereas the other Gospel writers seem to have more an eye for the historical, the events, the happenings, the visible works of Christ.

And as a consequence we have in John a rather simple vocabulary and grammar, by which John has left much of the depth of the truth unexpressed and as it were for the reader to search out for himself the riches that lie between the words and behind them.

And only by patient meditation and spiritual growth in the things of the Scriptures do we find ever new riches of revelation concerning the Word that became flesh.

Although this can be said of all of John's writing, it is especially true of that great Passover discourse embraced in John 14 through 17, and more specifically we may say this of the passage, John 16:8-11.

Now indeed in the interpretation and understanding of a passage it seems very desirable to take very careful note of the words of the passage and to interpret it from within the text itself, using the context to suggest what is best suitable to the course of thought and what is the most probable meaning.

Yet in the case of John's writing we shall often find that it is almost impossible to find even one loose stitch from which we can begin to unravel or even one fully known quantity through which to approach and solve the unknown.

So it is especially in this passage of John 16:8-11.

The following are some of the problems:

Does world mean 1. the unbelieving world, or 2. the believing world, or 3. the world in both senses together.

Again, does reprove here mean 1. convince, or 2. convict, or 3. persuade?

Again does "because" indicate 1. cause, 2. ground, or 3. reason?

Again does righteousness apply 1. to God, 2. to Christ, or 3. to the Church?

And again, does judgment mean, 1. equity, or 2. condemnation?

These are some of the questions that occur as we read this passage to get the meaning from it.

We shall first of all begin by noticing the main subject of this passage. He is called the Paraclete, which word can be literally translated, *Advocatus*, Advocate, one who is called in, one who is called to help another with his difficulties. In this sense Christ Himself is also once called our Advocate with the Father, where too strict a literalism would, of course raise the question: "who called Him to hand", although in general we may say that He is appointed so that we may always and at any time call him to hand in our need of forgiveness with the Father.

Now the Spirit is the Paraclete, the Advocate of the cause of Christ. He is that in this world while the Saviour is gone to heaven as He so often mentions in this discourse. He takes care of Christ's affair in this world where the Christ is gathering His Church, the inspiring of the infallible Apostles, the preaching of the Gospel, the regenerating of the elect, their sanctification, and the final quickening of their mortal bodies.

But the emphasis lies on something different here. He is rather seen here as sent to the disciples to be *their* Advocate. The Father will give *you* another Advocate, chapter 14:16, He will teach you and bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever I said unto you, 14:26, Whom I send to *you* from the Father, 15:26 and again, It is expedient for *you*. . . . I will send Him unto you, 16:7.

And so it means that although the future looks so dark for them, although they dread so to see Him leave them, although they will feel hopelessly thrust forth upon a world-wide mission, in a world where even the Master Himself was frustrated and broken by the hostility of men, yet they must not be afraid. For they are to receive a new helper, another who will be far more able to help them than He Himself could in his state and condition of humiliation, although He was at their hand every moment.

There is however, still another limitation that we must observe as we speak of the task of this Advocate.

That is, that He is the Spirit of the glorified Servant of Jehovah, and that may easily lead us astray in trying to conceive of His task indicated in this passage.

He is indeed the Spirit of the glorified Christ, of the Incarnated, humble, crucified, resurrected, and glorified Son of Man, and as such His work is also

different from His work in general in creation. I am aware of the fact that it is difficult to separate, and although in seeking to know the revelation of God we like to distinguish more and more, yet at the same time we always feel that we are drawn back to a unity in God's work. And therefore I do not like to say the Spirit in general has *this* task, but the Spirit of the Mediator has *that* task. Ultimately there is nothing outside the reach of the glorified servant of Jehovah.

But perhaps for the present we can speak of a general work of the Spirit. That is the work whereby he gives to man the sense and the experience of reality, the knowledge of the world around about him, the understanding of truth, the conscience of good and evil.

Now in distinction we can speak of the work of the Spirit of Christ as the promoting of the Cause of the glorified Christ in the world.

But let us not forget that this embraces all things. He has not come only to work salvation but also to execute judgment. He has not come only to prepare the righteous for the kingdom of heaven but also to complete the justification of the ways of God with the wicked and the lost. They do not sin and perish as subjects of God in general but as subjects of the crucified and exalted Lord.

Therefore we must emphasize that although he is the Spirit of the glorified Christ and in our passage does His work as such, yet that does not at all indicate that it is a work of salvation and redemptive grace.

His work as Mediator-Spirit also concerns itself with the perishing.

And now having taken this position we may go a step farther and say that the saving aspect of His work as Advocate of the glorified Christ is excluded here. I am aware that interpreters in order to demonstrate this passage often hasten to the event recorded in Acts 2 where by the outpouring of the Spirit 3000 were immediately brought to salvation. But this idea seems excluded by certain considerations.

In the first place the picture that is given of the world in its hatred of the disciples is unrelieved by any changes or prospect of change. The description of the world and its attitude towards the disciples begins at chapter 15:18. In that passage the men of the world are represented as haters, persecutors, killers of the Apostles. Moreover they are those among whom Christ did his great miracles, and those among whom the Apostles will first appear as those who by right belong to their synagogues. That is they are the unrepentant reprobate Jews of the Apostolic age in the first place. In that Age the division between sheep and wolves is very soon drawn and those who do not very soon accede spiritually to the Apostolic labor and preaching remain persecutors and haters of the

Christ and His cause because they are not merely opposers of the mysterious Nazarene and His disciples, but they are in deepest principle haters of the Father. 15:21, 23; 16:3.

In the second place we may note that the disciples are here not spoken to with a view to their task as builders of the Apostolic church but much rather with a view to their own personal fellowship in love with one another and their fruit-bearing in good works, and it is also this unity of love in sanctification that the Saviour desires to see realized in them also with respect to the world, in order that the world that does not know the Father may yet believe, that He has indeed sent His Son and loved Him and His people. (See John 17:21, 23).

Thirdly that this is perfectly in accord with the purpose and the prediction of the Saviour Himself we can learn by comparing with Matt. 23, where He compares the disciples and the multitudes on the one hand with the Scribes and Pharisees on the other. And after prescribing the brotherly humility of the disciples, He bursts forth in the awful woes of that chapter, and ends by saying that by garnishing the sepulchres of the prophets but raising themselves above their father's murderous course they are witnesses against themselves and fill up the measure of their fathers. And then we have the striking words that are so akin to the thoughts in our passage. "Behold, I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, and some of them you shall kill and crucify, and some of them you shall scourge in your synagogues and persecute them from city to city, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of the righteous Abel. . . . verily I say unto you all these things (deeds of blood, see Luke 11:49-51) shall come upon this generation.

Now it is true that in the first place they shall come upon them historically in the destruction of Jerusalem, but nevertheless the ground for the imputation lies in their treatment of Christ and His cause in the fulness of time.

What this means for the nature of the Spirit's convicting work we shall see in a further article.

A. P.

— Synod of 1946 —

The Synod of our churches has come and is gone again: its acts are history. In due time these acts will appear so that you may be able to have a copy of them for yourselves, a copy of the official acts of our churches. In this connection I would say that it is not a very good sign that so very few avail themselves of the

opportunity to buy a copy of these acts from year to year. Our Synods have decided from time to time to print 300 or more copies, but after sending the requisite amount to the consistories, there are not many that apply to me for their own copy. And that is a bad sign. It shows that there is not much interest in the work of God as such as we may perform it as a church-denomination. And I would urge you all to make up for lost time and send in your request for a copy of all our acts, from 1940 to 1945. The price is nominal.

First of all, allow me to note that the Rev. Richard Veldman preached the pre-Synodical sermon, Tuesday evening, June 4, 1946, on the text as found in Phil. 2:12, 13: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." This service was well attended and the brother spoke to the edification and the comfort of the saints.

The next morning, June 5, 1946, synod had its first session in the church of Hull, Iowa. This is the first time that synod gathered outside of Grand Rapids, Michigan. And according to the acts of this synod, also next year we will meet away from our usual gathering place; this time we will go to South Holland, Ill.

Well, the president of last Synod, the Rev. Richard Veldman, opened the meeting with the usual devotionals: we sang Psalter No. 203; he read II Tim. 2, after which he lead in prayer.

The credentials from the two classes showed that the following brethren were delegated by their respective classes to conduct the business coming before synod: from Classis West the Revs. G. Vos, A. Cammenga, L. Vermeer and P. De Boer; and the elders T. Kooima, P. Hoekstra, W. Huisken, and C. Vander Molen. From Classis East the Revs. J. De Jong, M. Gritters, H. Hoeksema and B. Kok; and the elders G. Gritter, D. Jonker, G. M. Ophoff and N. Yonker.

These credentials were received.

Then the Moderamen was chosen with the following result: The Rev. G. Vos was chosen for president, Vice-president, the Rev. J. De Jong, Secretary, the Rev. M. Gritters and Assistant-secretary, the Rev. B. Kok.

The Rev. F. Buehrer of Green Bay, Wisconsin was welcomed as a delegate-visitor from the Reformed Church in the U. S.

The time of meeting is decided on, synod doing its work from 9 A.M. till noon and from 1:30 to 5:30 daily until the work is done. This Synod worked from Wednesday morning till Monday afternoon. There was much work on the schedule for this year.

A committee was appointed to divide the work before Synod between several committees of pre-advice. This committee reported after a while and their re-

port was adopted by Synod. Then Synod adjourned until the following morning in order to give the appointed committees time to prepare the material for synodical action. There are 4 committees of pre-advice.

Committee II reported part of its report, namely, that part which dealt with examination of a student, brother James Howerzyl, who was presented to Synod by the faculty for examination, through the Theological School Committee. This report was adopted and brother Howerzyl was examined during sessions of Synod on Thursday and Friday. He also preached a sermon before Synod on I Cor. 1:23, 24: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

The examination in the theological branches was conducted by professors Hoeksema and Ophoff, while the Rev. J. De Jong conducted the examination in practica.

We may say with complete confidence that this young man showed in the examinations and the sermon which he preached that he possesses the talents necessary for the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments. It was a pleasure to witness these proceedings.

Afterwards Synod met in closed session in order to vote on his candidacy and the result was that Synod expressed itself unanimously in favor of declaring brother Howerzyl candidate in our churches. May the God of His Church soon give him a call to one of our churches and may he labor long in this blessed office.

Brother Howerzyl was called in and the president addressed to him a few well-chosen words of congratulation, after which the Rev. Hoeksema led us in prayer and thanksgiving. Synod arose and sang the Holland benediction: "Dat's Heeren zegen op U daal!" The whole Synod congratulated the brother individually. May God bless him!

We now return to the session of Synod of Thursday morning, when the reporter of Committee I read its report.

The first part of this report dealt with the publication of the Church Order. Since the Synod of 1943 when that Synod entertained an overture from Classis East, instruction Grand Haven, our Synods have been busy with this matter. Various committees were appointed which reported on the work accomplished. The committee appointed in 1945 completed its task and the booklet is now ready for publication. Synod decided to give this last committee power to act on the publishing of the book. I would note in this connection that this booklet will not only contain the translated church order, edition 1914, Keegstra and Van Dellen, but also the various by-laws which our former Classis had adopted and these by-laws are incorporated in the

book under the various articles to which they refer. Secondly, this booklet will also contain the constitutions of all our standing committees of Synod, various rules and regulations and various formulas, such as the Formula of Subscription, the Public Declaration of Agreement (which is read at the beginning of each Synod), the form for a call-letter, the form for a ministerial certificate of dismissal and testimonial, forms for classical and synodical credentials and forms for transfer of attestations of membership and baptism certificates and also for dismissal certificates. As far as the constitutions are concerned, you will find therein the constitutions of the Theological School, the Theological School Committee, the Mission Committee, of the Emeritus Committee, and of the Synodical Committee. As far as the Rules and Regulations are concerned, the booklet will comprise the Rules of Order of Synod, the Rules for Synodical Delegates Ad Examina, and the Questions and Answers for Church Visitation. We do not know as yet what the price will be of this book, but when it is announced for sale, it will pay every member who wants to live the full life of a Protestant Reformed Church member, to buy one of these booklets.

Next we treated the overture of Classis East, instruction Creston Church, relative a proposed letter to be sent by Synod to the President of the U. S., regarding the evils of the Union with its closed shops and other evils. Synod decided to adopt this idea and it was further amended so that we are to send a letter to every member of congress, the president's cabinet and the supreme court. The letter will be published in full in the official Acts of Synod of 1946. And perhaps Concordia will publish it also.

Committee I further reported an overture of Classis East, instruction Second Church, Grand Rapids, Mich. This overture dealt with alleged injustices and discrepancies relative assessments paid and subsidies received by some churches.

The committee of pre-advice served Synod with the following advice, which was also adopted:

1. Re point 1, to ask our Synodical Treasurer to furnish us with an annual statement about those churches that are delinquent in paying their assessments, and that Synod act upon such information accordingly.

2. Not to enter into the matter advanced under point 2 of this overture, and that Synod continue to grant subsidies by the present method, namely, that each case be investigated by the Classes, and with their advice sent to Synod.

Ground: It is impossible to construe a set of rules that could be made to apply in all cases, since there is so much difference between the congregations economically, in strength of numbers, individual riches, etc.

3. Point 3 is covered by our advice under 1 above.

4. To express that the grounds adduced by the Second Church are far too general and instead of being based on definite facts, are founded on rumors.

5. To advise the Second Church that if they are convinced that the matter of subsidies is not treated according to honesty and righteousness, they come to Synod with a definite overture, based on definite ground, and supplying Synod with a concept of definite rules, which might help to rectify the alleged injustices.

As stated above, the first part of the afternoon session of Thursday was devoted to the sermon by and the examination of student Howerzyl.

Afterwards Synod continued its treatment of the report of Committee I.

Synod adopted the advice of the committee anent the overtures from Classis East, instruction Grand Haven, Mich. This instruction reads: "To return to the former situation in which our Mission Committee was chosen from the Eastern branch of our churches." As the matter now stands, that is, before this Synod took action, five members of that important committee are too reside East of the Mississippi and three West of that river. You can imagine the inconvenience of such procedure. But this is now corrected when all the members of that committee will be chosen from the East.

Synod also adopted the advice on the overture of Classis East, instruction Holland, Michigan relative missionary work in the Netherlands. The committee for correspondence with the Netherlands Reformed Churches, appointed by a former Synod, is to report on this activity, i.e., correspondence, at the next Synod. And Synod answered the overture thus: "doing mission work in the Netherlands is a misnomer, since mission work ought to lead to the establishing of churches, which cannot be our purpose in the Netherlands." This committee referred to is composed of the Revs. Hoeksema, Ophoff and De Jong.

Synod acted favorably on the overture, Classis East, Oak Lawn's instruction, relative to a proposed Year Book of our Churches. It will appear next year with the Acts of Synod. I have searched the Acts carefully, but I did not find a record of the committee to be appointed for this task. A Year Book contains quite a bit of statistical information, the tabulating and gathering of which is no small task.

Next we hear the report of committee II which is adopted for information.

The report of the Rector of our school is read and adopted. This report shows that our school is in a very good condition.

This committee also advised Synod on the application of brother Walter Vis of Hull, Iowa, who came to Synod through the Theological School Committee, to become a student at our school. After the usual

examination of the brother and his credentials, he was accepted.

Friday morning we had the examination of student Howerzyl, as reported above. And in the afternoon we continued our work on the report of committee II. A student who desired re-admittance to our school was referred to the Theological School Committee where this matter belonged.

Next was the matter of the overture of Classis East, instruction Grand Haven relative the acquiring of a site for a Theological School building. Committee I had reported on this matter but their advice was tabled until this committee should advise synod on matters that are closely related. Committee II, treating the report of the Theological School Committee anent the expanding of our school, reports and advises Synod. A substitute motion with three amendments is adopted by Synod. The content of this decision amounts to this that the Theological School committee has the mandate to look for a suitable site for a Theological School building to be built later; to take the matter of the enlargement of our curriculum under advisement and to report next year; to present to Synod the name of a man or men whom they consider worthy and capable to take the proposed post-graduate course in our proposed expanded school. And the Theological School Committee shall do this in conjunction with the faculty.

Synod also decides that for the possible acquiring of a building site for our own school, an assessment of \$3.00 per family shall be levied.

The Rev. De Boer now reads the report of Committee III. But at the conclusion of it the time of adjourning is there.

At the evening of that day Synod gathers with the congregation of our Hull Church in order to witness the graduation exercises of candidate J. Howerzyl, at which exercises the said candidate speaks as well as the Rector, Professor G. M. Ophoff.

Monday morning Synod reconvened and the report of Committee III is further treated.

The proposed subsidies are granted by Synod.

Synod adopts the advice of the committee to have a questionnaire mimeographed for those churches that desire support.

Kalamazoo is permitted to ask for a collection in Classis West.

Orange City is granted permission to ask for a collection in Classis East.

Now Synod proceeds to treat some matters relative Missions. First of all, Synod decides that we shall not engage at this time in foreign mission endeavor, but refers this matter to the Mission Committee for further study and advisement. Some names, proposed by Classis East, for membership in the Mission Committee, are appointed as such by Synod. Finally, Synod

decides that the home missionary be assured of assistance in his labors by permitting the Mission Committee in conjunction with the calling church, to ask the help of a fellow-minister.

Committee IV now reports on the material placed in its hands.

The salary of the Stated Clerk is raised from \$50.00 to \$100.00 per year.

Important decisions were made regarding our Psalter revision. The committee ad hoc was advised to complete its work and report at next year's Synod, since the churches are in great need of new Psalters. Also another committee is appointed in conjunction with Psalter revision, which committee will carefully check the confessions, forms and liturgy in the back part of the Psalter and report at next year's Synod. The Committee: Revs. De Boer and Doezeema.

Hope Church advises Synod that they have attained to the status of self-support.

The E.B.P. and the Emeritus Committees are reminded to send an annual report to Synod.

The synodical treasurer's report is adopted.

South Holland's congregation will be the calling church for the next Synod of our churches.

The brethren M. De Goede and S. G. Schaafsma are appointed as auditing committee of the treasurer's books.

Synod now votes for members in standing committees, as follows: For the Mission Committee: Revs. J. De Jong and J. Heys and elder G. Gritter. Emeritus Committee: elders E. Dykstra and T. Kooima. E.B.P. Committee: Mr. F. LaGrange and Mr. G. Stonehouse. Theological School Committee: Revs. J. De Jong and R. Veldman; elders H. De Jong and S. Kuiper. Synodical Committee: Rev. A. Cammenga.

Mr. D. Jonker was elected Stated Clerk for three years and Mr. F. LaGrange was elected treasurer for three years.

The Acts of Synod, including the pre-synodical sermon, shall be prepared and published by the Moderamen of Synod and 300 copies shall be printed.

The Revs. G. Vos and A. Cammenga are appointed as representatives to the Reformed Church in the U. S.

The chairman addresses a word of farewell to Synod and voices his appreciation for the fine spirit of co-operation which was evident.

Synod instructs the Stated Clerk to thank Hull's congregation for its cordial reception of Synod.

The Rev. H. Hoeksema closes this final session of synod with prayer and thanksgiving.

D. Jonker, Stated Clerk.

NOTICE: — Following our usual custom the Standard Bearer will not be published on the 15th of August.

Report of Classis East - Convened July 10, 1946 at Grand Rapids, Michigan

Classis East met on July 10, 1946 at Fuller Ave. The meeting was begun with the singing of Psalter No. 203:1, 2 and 5. Rev. M. Schipper, who presided at the previous meeting of Classis, conducted the opening exercises.

The credentials were read and received, showing that all the churches were represented at this meeting. Classis was then declared constituted.

According to rotation Rev. H. Veldman is called upon to preside. He speaks a few words of welcome and expresses the desire of brotherly cooperation in the meetings of the day.

Opportunity is given to the delegates, who are present for the first time, to sign the Formula of Subscription.

The minutes of the last meeting of Classis are read and approved.

Classis decided to ask the Editors of the Standard Bearer and Concordia that the principles in the report given and accepted by the last Classis, be published in both the Standard Bearer and Concordia. (As stated clerk I will take the liberty to include them with this report, D.J.)

Classis decided that from now on, at the beginning of each meeting, it shall be announced to Classis what matters are on the Agenda.

Grand Haven requested Classical Appointments. The following committee was appointed to draw up a schedule for classical appointments: Rev. S. Cammenga and the elders J. Buiter and A. Peterson.

Later in the meeting they brought the following schedule, which was adopted by Classis:

July 14, Rev. R. Veldman; July 21, Rev. G. Lubbers; July 28, Rev. M. Schipper; August 4, Rev. B. Kok; August 11, Rev. J. Jong; August 18, Rev. W. Hofman; August 25, Rev. J. Heys; September 1, Rev. M. Gritters; September 8, Rev. S. Cammenga; September 15, Rev. H. Veldman; September 22, Rev. H. De Wolf; September 29, Rev. R. Veldman.

An instruction from one of our churches is read, asking for information in regard to labor organizations. Classis decided to inform this consistory: "that Classis has previously taken the stand that

membership in so-called neutral unions and in our churches is incompatible."

Advisory vote is given to Rev. L. Vermeer, Rev. G. M. Ophoff and Rev. C. Hanko.

According to the decision of our last Synod, that the proposed changes of the Psalter be given in the hands of the Classes for further study, Classis now takes up this matter of Psalter Revision as found in the Acts of the Synod of 1945.

Various decisions are made in re this report, some approving and some disapproving the suggested revision.

Classis decided to discontinue the discussion of the Psalter Committee Report at 4:30 o'clock.

Rev. J. De Jong was appointed to thank the ladies for their catering services.

The next meeting of Classis will be held D. V. the second Wednesday in October at Fuller Ave.

The questions of Art. 41 of the Church Order were asked; and were answered satisfactorily by the consistories.

The minutes were read and approved. Upon motion Classis adjourned. After the singing of Psalter No. 412, Rev. H. De Wolf closed with prayer.

D. JONKER, Stated Clerk.

Principles, adopted by Classis East in re admitting members of other denominations as guests to our communion table.

I. As to the general question, concerning the principle involved in the case of Holland, your committee is of the opinion that members of other churches, not in all respects agreeing with our Protestant Reformed Faith, may be admitted to our communion table upon their request:

A. Provided:

1. That such members are at such time, and most probably will be for some time, deprived of the opportunity to celebrate communion in a church of their own denomination.

2. That proper request be made by

such a member at the earliest possible opportunity, at the Consistory, in order that the latter may be in a position properly to investigate the faith and walk of the petitioner.

3. That upon proper inquiry the Consistory is satisfied that such members:

a. Know and repent of their sins, and trust for forgiveness and salvation only in the blood of Christ; also that they seek the Lord's table for the strengthening of their faith, and are desirous to lead a holy life.

b. Reveal themselves as believers in their walk and conversation, and are not defiled with any of the sins mentioned in our Form for Communion.

c. Do not belong to any secret society or worldly union, membership of which bars our own members from the table of the Lord.

d. Are not under discipline in their own church.

B. Grounds:

1. The bread and wine are, according to Scripture, the communion of the body and blood of the Lord; to refuse guests under circumstances as above described would be tantamount to excommunicating them from the body of Christ.

2. The conditions stipulated above are in accord with all that our Confessions teach concerning the Lord's Supper and the worthy partakers thereof. Cf. Heid. Cat. questions 75-82; Conf. Belg. Art. 35. And the same conditions quite satisfy the demands of our Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper.

3. This custom has been followed in the Reformed Churches, and is in accord with the opinion of its leading theologians, since the time of the Reformation.

C. Advice:

Your committee advises Classis to adopt the above as a general declaration of the principles involved in the matter.

D. JONKER, Stated Clerk.